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DISCOURSE

BY

O. B. FROTHINGHAM

AT THE

INSTALLATION OF J. K. KARCHER

WITH

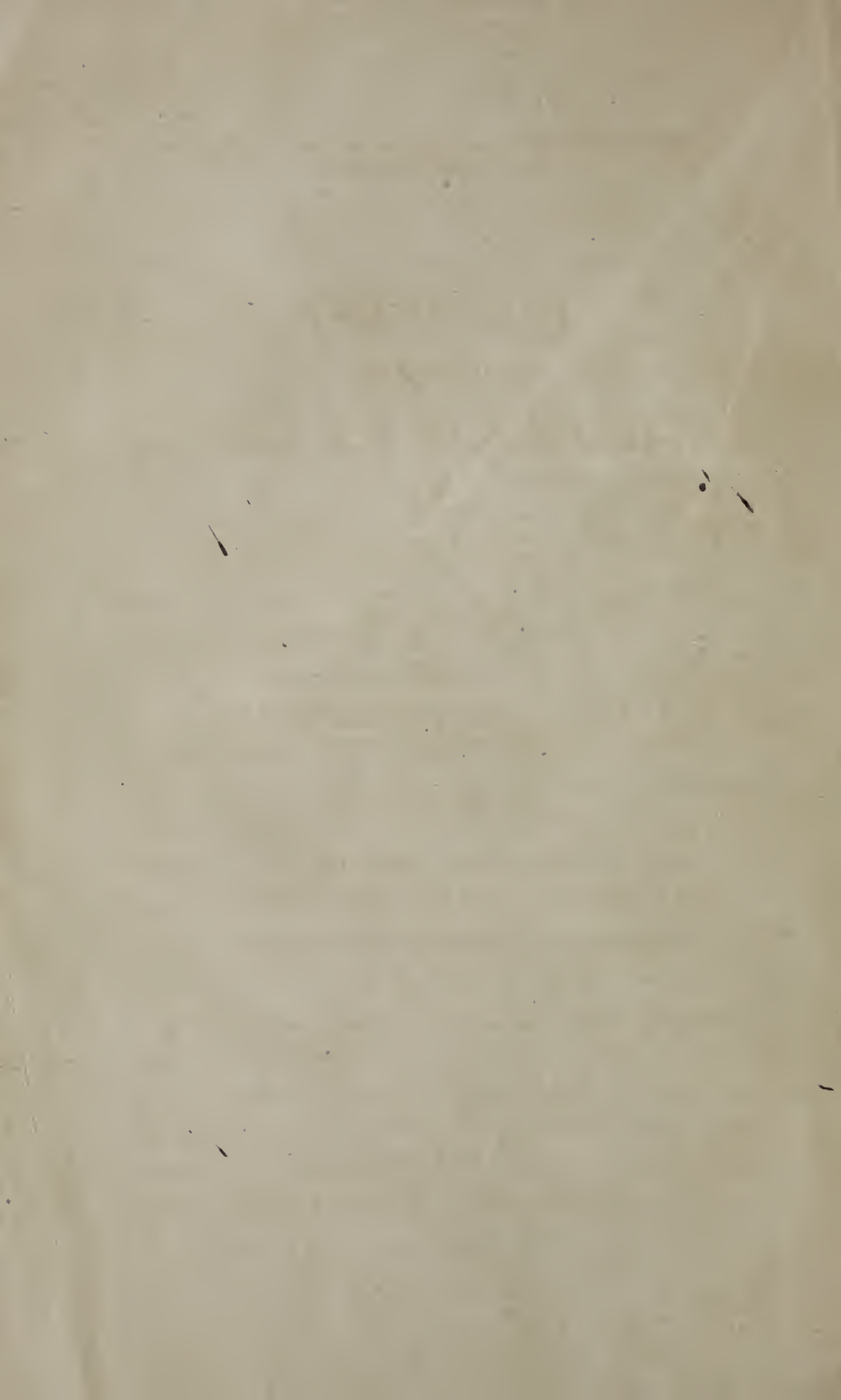
THE CHARGE

AND

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP

C. Sherman & Son, Printers,

Seventh and Cherry Sts., Philad.



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THE CHRISTIAN CONSCIOUSNESS—ITS ELEMENTS
AND ITS EXPRESSION

A
DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT THE

INSTALLATION OF J. K. KARCHER

AS

PASTOR OF THE SPRING GARDEN UNITARIAN CHURCH

OCTOBER 5 1859

BY

O. B. FROTHINGHAM

MINISTER OF THE THIRD UNITARIAN CHURCH IN NEW YORK

WITH THE CHARGE BY

S. LONGFELLOW

MINISTER OF THE SECOND UNITARIAN CHURCH IN BROOKLYN, N. Y.

AND THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP BY

W. H. FURNESS

MINISTER OF THE FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA

PHILADELPHIA

T. B. PUGH 615 CHESTNUT STREET

1859

C. SHERMAN & SON, PRINTERS,
Corner Seventh and Cherry Streets, Philadelphia.

DISCOURSE

JOHN XV. 5.

I AM THE VINE, YE ARE THE BRANCHES; HE THAT ABIDETH IN ME, AND I IN HIM, THE SAME BRINGETH FORTH MUCH FRUIT.

HAVE you ever fairly mastered this thought: That once upon a time, eighteen hundred years ago, what we call Christianity was all gathered up in the person of a single man, who lived and breathed like other men, in the far-off land of Judea,—when Christ was Christianity, and all the Christianity there was on earth? Put the intervening centuries by. Let your imaginations brush away, like so much dust on a window-pane, the vast Church that stands between you and him. Disappear, pope, cardinal, and priest; cathedral, chapel, shrine, altar, vestments, symbol, cross and goblet, keys and dove; vanish, creeds of every complexion, sects of every name; vanish, pulpit and vestry-room, organ and choir, reading desk and surplice; vanish, New Testament, Liturgy, and Hymn-book. Let us see that shape ye have so long hidden from our view. In that remote corner of the earth, Jesus of Nazareth

stands alone, uncomprehended by the few who love him, despised or feared by the few who love him not, unheeded by the many who see in him nothing by which he can be distinguished from common humanity; solitary in person, and solitary in spirit, having little in common with his generation; solitary, with his great Religion folded in the secret place of his own heart. The mighty Truths which the world hail as revelations and build up into confessions, are his private thoughts. The creative forces which have wrought such moral results, and even something like a transformation in the sentiments of the most elevated portion of mankind, are the silent affections of his heart. The regenerating principles which have effected so much towards the growth of a new order of humanity, are the deep convictions of his individual conscience; and profoundly hidden in the experiences of his soul, are the spiritual laws that have since purified the piety and re-constructed the worship of millions of men. In that one peculiar being, as in a seed, lie latent the great apostles and saints, the eloquent preachers and devoted ministers, the seekers wasting themselves in watching for the highest truth, the motley crowd of worshippers with their *Misereres* and *Jubilates*, the organized bands of workers with their crosses and benedictions. Anselm and Athanasius, Luther and Borromeo, Wycliff and Fenelon, Channing and Swedenborg, Dorothy Dix and Florence Nightin-

gale, the confessors, reformers, and martyrs of every age of Christendom, are all lying dormant in that one soul which in the body men called Jesus. The seed fulfils the conditions of all growth. It falls into the ground and dies.

Ere long the fruit it was to bear, begins to appear. Little clusters of people like grapes on a vine are found in cities both near and remote from the place where he lived. They cling to each other. They grow together as if united by a common life, and attract the notice of all men by the singularity of their worship and behavior. Who are these people; and what makes them, so various in feature, garb, and habit, as they seem, thus to seek one another? They are, indeed, people who were utter strangers until now, in a time when stranger meant enemy; but a secret attraction, turning enemy and stranger into friend, has brought them into one society. To them existence is not what it was; the world is not what it was; new thoughts occupy their minds; fresh affections, making old things seem distasteful, are yearning after congenial intercourse; an awakened moral sense abhors the practices in which they had before innocently engaged, and makes another order of the world necessary to their peace and satisfaction; strange hopes have taken hold on their souls; strange aspirations and purposes, which have altered their whole attitude towards their genera-

tion. They are one in the sympathy of a common Faith, Hope, and Charity. And what has begotten in these people, this new and singular spirit? They have seen, heard, conversed with, the men to whom this Jesus had communicated himself through some subtle influence which they could neither explain to themselves nor to others. They had no insight into his motives or intentions. Up to the very last hour of his life, they indulged a hope, which all his life long he had been laboring to dispel. His immortal ideas they failed to grasp, while they clung to his less significant words with a tenacity that nothing could loose. Yet, through all their stupidity and prejudice, his spirit had found its way to theirs. His being had bathed them like an atmosphere; had refreshed them like another climate. His character had shed itself like an aroma from his person, and penetrated invisibly to their natures' roots. The mild radiance of his presence, the beaming of his face, the glance of his eye, the accents of his voice interpreting to their hearts words which their understanding could not apprehend, the indescribable serenity of his mien, so holy and so gracious, all expressed and imparted the spiritual life that was in him, so that when he died, that life was in various forms reproduced in those that knew him, according to their degree of susceptibility. And these, again, borne like seeds on the breath of the Spirit, spread the divine conta-

gion even to distant lands, and made the attributes of the inward Christ visible in multitudes of communions, some of which knew him not, even by name.

You will understand now what I mean by saying that Christianity was LIVED into the world. It was not built up by any skill in organizing establishments. It was not planted by sheer force of authoritative teaching. Men were not drilled into it, nor indoctrinated into it; they were BORN into it. It came to them as inspiration comes, and the effect of its coming was a new CONSCIOUSNESS, a new motive force, an original stamp of mind, and style of character. In a word, there was another life in the race.

And this life communicated itself according to its own vital laws. Its own activity increased its force, and it rolled on, like a river, in fuller and fuller tides, accumulating power as it poured through the channels of affection and duty. Every new demonstration it made was another accession to its volume. Every effort it put forth re-acted to increase its resources for effort. Every church it established, and it scattered churches about like seed, was a new centre of nervous energy. Its apparent waste in self-sacrifice was its perpetual rejuvenescence. Every Christian thrown to the lions, or swathed in Nero's leaden shirts to light the streets of Rome; every soldier who went to the cross rather than throw his pinch of incense into

the censer that swung before the Pagan idol ; every maid who left her lover rather than disavow him to whom her soul was united ; every matron whom Pliny caused to be submitted to the torture ; every brother and sister who died nursing heathen enemies stricken by the plague ; every minister or layman who gave his money or even offered himself to redeem his brethren from slavery, contributed the elements of moral being, enriched and purified, to the source from which they had received them at first. The death of the members was life to the whole body. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church. And in a few generations, by an invisible but irresistible power, which the historian cannot make tangible to the common apprehension, the Pagan temples were converted into basilicas ; the Pagan statues were re-baptized into the name of apostles and saints ; the Pagan festivals received a new and holier interpretation ; the Pagan symbols were consecrated to diviner thoughts and made significant of nobler influence ; the Pagan vessels of sacrifice were filled with the water of eternal life ; altar and cross, cup and dove, became emblematical of other spiritual facts ; and the dry channels of an effete faith were occupied once more by the tides of a new Religion.

Christianity, let me repeat, was LIVED into the world. As a life, it reproduced and extended itself. Its ten-

dency, at least, nowhere completely fulfilled, it is true, but everywhere pushing against the obstacles in its path, was to re-animate and re-construct human relations. To me it seems clear, that, however uncertain and blurred the line may be that bounds Christendom, it does nevertheless form, and has always formed, a distinct domain from Heathendom; a domain characterized by a climate if not by a scenery of its own. We cannot pass the border that lies between them, without being at once sensible that we are breathing another and a more bracing air.

These are very commonplace and rudimental things to say. I only remind you of them as preparatory to other thoughts I wish to offer. In our discussions about Christianity, it is clear that we have come at last to the heart of the matter. We have approached the last analysis. We have got behind tradition and history, behind form and theory, and are now trying to touch the secret spring of the Religion.

We have heard much lately about the Christian ‘CONSCIOUSNESS,’ as distinct from particular forms of belief or modes of thought; a general state of mind and affection that belongs to all genuine Christians alike, the partaking of which makes one a Christian, the lack of which makes one to be not a Christian; a prevailing and determining spirit, which, having the hidings of its power far down among the roots of hu-

man nature, distributes a secret but vital and quickening influence all through the substance of the moral and spiritual being, and diffuses abroad an aroma too delicate to be caught and imprisoned in symbolical books and sacred confessions, yet powerful enough to impress every spiritual sense and stimulate every spiritual desire. I believe there is such a spiritual Consciousness, common to all Christians, and distinguishing them from all who are not Christians more clearly than divines have ever succeeded in doing, while, at the same time, it prevents Christians, however artificially divided among themselves, from falling out finally with one another; a spiritual Consciousness which is nothing more or less than the mind of Jesus organizing itself in humanity.

And now comes the question, to which all I have thus far said is only preliminary, a question of grave practical importance,—nay, the question of importance now: “WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS WHICH COMPOSE THIS CHRISTIAN CONSCIOUSNESS?” How much and what does this state of mind comprise? If we can determine this, we have reached the heart of our Religion. Of course, I cannot presume to determine such a point as this for others; but let me crave your attention to such conclusions upon it as I have been able to arrive at myself.

If I were asked to put my finger on the central per-

suasion, about which all the Christian graces cluster, and out of which they grow, I should indicate the conviction of the ‘SONSHIP OF THE SOUL;’ the deeply-felt belief that the human soul has God for its author, friend, guide, and inspirer; that it is privileged to say, “Abba, Father,” and has within it the divine witness that it is the child of God, and if a child, then an heir to the treasures of a heavenly kingdom.

In this radical persuasion are involved two or three vast and pregnant ideas. They are these: that God is a living, creative, conscious Being; not a senseless law, not a brute force, not an impersonal order, not a soul of the world, boundless and impalpable, but a causing Will, a quickening Spirit, in whom all spirits live and move and have their being,—“One God and Father, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” The living soul cannot be child of a lifeless Kosmos, but must proceed from that which is the infinite perfection of itself. That is the first thought.

Here is the second: This Fatherly Spirit yearns towards his offspring with an inextinguishable love; does not hide himself from them, but presses continually to reveal himself; does not sit aloof, waiting for them to seek him and win his favor by compliments and gifts, but rather seeks them, goes into waste places and low places to find them, and rejoices when He can bring one of them home to an abandoned blessing and a for-

feited peace. Ignorance excites his pity, never his contempt; infirmity invites his condescension; and sin itself, however obstinate and hardened, instead of frightening away the dear Spirit of Grace, or closing up the divine heart of Kindness, only provokes the benignity of Heaven to plead and strive with it the more, if by any means it can overcome it by an inexorable mercy.

A third thought is involved in this persuasion of the Soul's Sonship; this namely, that every soul of man has in it, as an essential part of its constitution, some germs of divine attributes,—“God's seed,” as an apostle boldly phrases it,—so that it may claim, in grand humility, to sustain a vital and organic connection with the absolute Spirit. Even as a human parent perpetuates himself in his offspring, through traits of mind and features of character that endure amid all the vicissitudes of a troubled and an erring career, and are, as it were, the parent's real presence, in-dwelling and in-working in the children's being, though they live in different parts of the globe, and put on the motliest disguises, and undergo the most disfiguring fortunes, so, if we may carry the analogy up so high, the Infinite Father lives in his children, and they live in him: he the root of their being, they the out-blooming of his; thus justifying the superb Transcendentalism of Paul: “Know ye not that YE are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”

These are thoughts, vast, deep, shadowy. They are not dogmas ; they are not opinions. They are spoiled and clipped by logical definition. They are spiritual truths, addressing themselves to the higher reason, which each may define for himself who can, or may innocently leave in the indistinctness which the soul best loves. They are inferences from what the Christian regards not as a notion but as a fact, a fact of inward assurance, a great conviction, that abides as a corner-stone, immovable in the deep soil of his heart. They are his translation into thought of a feeling that is deeper than all thought and runs before it.

But this is not all. This belief in the Sonship of the Soul brings with it also a peculiar class of sentiments, which in every age have shown themselves especially characteristic of the religion which bears the name of Jesus. You will recognise them immediately. They are : Gratitude for the infinite Goodness that has crowned life with such dignity, solemnised it with such privileges, and enriched it with such joy ; loving Awe in the presence of the indwelling Deity ; Aspiration towards the holy seats of perfection which tower in light upon the dim confines of the spiritual being ; noble Discontent with the actual and ardent longing after the possible ; the sigh for progress, and the dream of peace to be won through pain ; the feeling of uneasiness caused by the want of harmony between the higher

nature and the lower ; the antagonism between passion and principle, duty and desire ; the sadness which in gloomy spirits is a darkness as of death, but which more commonly and truly is a deep, gentle seriousness, ready at a moment to break into light at the thought of God's Love ; sadness begotten of ignorance that is satisfied with itself no longer, and imperfection which is peace no more ; sadness of mistake and shortcoming, vanity of hope, weakness of purpose, and failure of effort ; sadness taking often the hue of self-abasement, and in passionate natures deepening into the sense of sin ; sadness that cannot heartily relish the light dainties of a pleasant life, and is frequently found turning its glistening eye thronewards, imploring that immediate aid of the Spirit, by which the spirit is cheered for its onward course. The Soul, aware of its Sonship, must at times be weighed down by the thought that it is but a prodigal son after all, fit only to be the companion of swine that wallow in the mire ; but the remembrance of its Father's house will turn the face homeward, and the feeling of guilt will be lost in the hope of pardon and the strain of endeavor.

But to proceed in my analysis. The persuasion of the Soul's Sonship involves a peculiar class of virtues, which of themselves betoken a new moral consciousness, and gloriously illustrate what has well been called the "new edition of human nature." Need I do more

than name purity, self-denial, patience, humility, meekness, contentedness, resignation? Need I define or vindicate benevolence, compassion, disinterestedness running into self-sacrifice, love, active, earnest, devoted, consecrating time, talents, wealth, influence, and fame to the work of delivering men from bondage to the lower nature, and restoring them to their birthright as children of the highest? The Christian ideal of the perfect life is recognized and honored over Christendom from end to end. The saintly men and women are of no sect. What Protestant does not appeal to Fenelon as an illustration of the qualities he deems the holiest? What Catholic refuses to see in Florence Nightingale a member of the true Sisterhood? What honest believer can fail to detect the ring of the true metal in George Holyoake, the chief of the English Secularists; and in Theodore Parker, the leader of New England heretics? The Christian style of man needs no theological label to denote it; it speaks for itself. The features are not to be mistaken. So distinguished are they from the lineaments which belong to any other type, that even a considerable modification of them is at once perceptible. What if its individual traits have been caricatured? What if self-denial has been presented as monkish asceticism, and humility has put on the garb of self-contempt? What if meekness has taken the form of servility, and patience in some of its ex-

emplars, has seemed like an abject disclaimer of all self-respect? All this only shows how strongly pronounced the type of character must be, that could cast the intractable nature of man in such exceedingly difficult moulds. And, however offensively distorted some of the countenances and forms may look, which stare at us from Catholic pictures, and meet us in the highways of Ecclesiastical history, who can help confessing the originality as well as the power of the transfiguring, or if any please to call it so, the disfiguring spirit which has brought to honor qualities that were despised in the heathen world, and brought into disrepute qualities that before had been held in highest esteem; reversing, in fact, the order in which the Graces had ever stood to one another, making first to be last, and last to be first? As the figure of Jesus among the heroes and sages of antiquity, so is the Christian type of character among the ideals of the moralists, whether of the Garden or the Porch. It is a fresh moral creation, neither Asiatic nor European, neither Hebrew, Greek, nor Roman; but an original outbirth from that exuberant humanity, which, as if tired of the old patterns, gathered up its highest energies, and broke out into a new species of man.

Such, hinted at in a few hurried and crowded expressions, altogether inadequate, I fear, to produce the effect intended, is the Christian Consciousness,—the heart of

our Religion. Such are the chief ideas, sentiments, virtues, that accompany the conviction of the Soul's Sonship with God.

In this conviction, it is now quite unnecessary to say, lie the creative forces, the elements of genius in our faith. Here is the root of its vitality, the cause of its effects. I emphasise this point, that I may correct what seems to me a misapprehension. It is common to speak of the Christian affections, the Christian consciousness and life, as if they were the last result of Christian institutions, instead of their originating cause,—the fruit of Christian doctrine rather than the seed thereof. But historically, it is certainly the truth to say that the Life was first. There was a spirit before there was an institution or a letter; and this was the order of history, because it was the necessary order of experience. Christendom was the expression of the consciousness, not the generator of it. Its office has been to interpret, not to preserve it; and this office, according to ability, it has discharged. From the beginning these implanted sentiments have sought expression. Of course, this expression, so far as it was an adequate one, re-acted on the sentiments themselves, to deepen and establish them; just as the perfect flower holds and drops the seeds from which many roots and stalks and flowers of its kind will spring. The perfect symbol becomes a casket. But the life was before the expres-

sion, and always is before it. The life is the same everywhere ; the expression changes with the ages.

The first expression, naturally enough, was outward. Already in the second century Christianity began to take the form of sacrament, symbol, and emblem. It addressed itself to the poetic sense, to the imagination, aye, to the senses, to men's eyes and ears. It found a silent but beautiful language for itself in Art ; it breathed out its soul in painting, sculpture, architecture, in all the pomp and imagery of the Church of Rome. The cathedral, built in the form of a cross, emblem of death and of immortality, having the gloomy caverns of hell under its pavement, and the glories of heaven among its arches, its spires rushing up eagerly into the glad skies, perpetuated, in characters of stone, the sorrows and the joys, the contritions and the aspirations, the martyr virtues and the saintly graces of the Christian mind. The pictured Madonna, with her melting eyes, folding in her arms the eternal child, presented to the gaze of men the vast thought that the supreme attributes of Deity were feminine ; that the love of God for his creatures was deep and tender, most like a mother's love for her child. The crucifix, set up in highways and byways, told the passer-by of a God who was forever giving his life for his children. From the bold canvas the Magdalen preached to the rudest sense, contrition ; the martyr, fortitude ; the saint, re-

nunciation ; the virgin, heavenly-mindedness ; while the Christ revealed to the eye what the mind could not comprehend : the mystery of the *Deity dwelling in humanity*, the *Sonship of the Soul*. The sacrament of communion told, impressively enough to those tropical Easterns, the same wonderful story of the vital connection between man and God, the divine becoming human, the human becoming divine. Nor did any other meaning lurk under the second sacrament of Baptism, which, if it was not supposed to restore Sonship to the Soul, was at least a visible sign of the Soul's Sonship, a token that God's seed was there. Indeed, there was hardly a belief, a sentiment, a duty, a shade of spiritual feeling, that did not assume poetic or emblematic shape. The very color of priestly vestments had in it a spiritual significance. Inconceivably rich and varied were the shapes of beauty. The Christian mind literally bloomed in oriel windows, trefoils, lilies, and roses all cut in stone. Still, as of old, they bloom ; but no longer are they fragrant of the sweet spirit that once breathed in them.

Thus the Christian Consciousness sought emblematic expression in Institutions. With equal urgency, but with scarcely better permanent effect, it endeavored, when more matured, to speak to the mind in Doctrines. The Theology of Christendom was a struggling and somewhat confused articulation of the soul's belief in its

Sonship. Through the doctrine of the Trinity was an effort to say that God was alive. The doctrine of Atonement was a rude attempt to say that God gave his deepest life for the well-being of his offspring. The doctrine of Incarnation was a bold oriental metaphor, setting forth the truth that God was vitally connected with the human soul,—that he was an inspiring and in-dwelling God. The doctrine of Human Depravity was a stammering utterance of the thought that the lower nature could not of itself rise to the heavenly seats. And the doctrine of Regeneration sharply asserted the truth that the soul must be conscious of its Sonship before it could enjoy the celestial privileges of the child. It was a diseased abhorrence of evil, and a morbid sense of sin, that groaned itself out in the hideous dogma of everlasting torments ; and it was the hunger after blessedness that revelled in such delirious dreams of heaven. There is, perhaps, not one conspicuous article of Christian belief that did not try to whisper, sing, or mutter, some feeling in the Christian Consciousness, and with a certain measure of success to *the speakers of dead languages* ; though now their speech is thick, and we hear only an indistinct mumbling of words, that sound to us like the wild maunderings of minds bereft of wits.

It is an undeniable fact now that the Christian life has ceased to find utterance for itself in the ancient

symbols and beliefs; nor is it likely to accept such crude forms of expression again. The wine of the Holy Ghost seems no longer content to fill communion cups. The water of eternal life does not pour itself naturally now into baptismal fonts. The fire of the Spirit is dying away on sacrificial altars, and fading from the flaming windows. The soul of our Faith appears to be weary now of the somewhat unprofitable task of thinking itself out into forms of credence; it has done enough of word-painting; the time is past when it can satisfy itself by coloring *alfresco* the walls of the human mind, or making a picture-gallery of the human imagination. The indifference to forms of faith and observance is profound, instinctive, and all but universal. On all hands we meet with the refusal to judge men by their opinions or their worship. In all sects people are ashamed to try character by the old tests of credence and conformity. The Christian MAN is the Christian, has become now the popular cry; and no one can be in doubt as to who is the Christian man. In one word, Christianity has come to an unimaginative, an unmetaphysical, an earnest, practical age;—an age that dislikes sentimentalism, avoids symbols, is blind to the significance of emblems;—an age which uses up every atom of human activity in work, and has no strength to spare for the Church as an institution, or the creed as a summary of Truth.

How then? Is the Christian Consciousness becoming indistinct? Is the Christian type of character fading out? Is the Christian life dissipated or dried up? Quite the contrary, to my apprehension. It was never so deep and abundant and wide in its diffusion as now. Never, since Jesus came, has the persuasion of the Soul's divine Sonship been so clear, so strong, so universal as it is to-day; nor, unless I am much mistaken, has there been a time when the peculiar elements of the Christian character, its most distinguishing principles, its most characteristic virtues, were so cordially honored and intelligently acquiesced in, as they are in this generation. The Christian consciousness does not seem so peculiar, because there is no Paganism now, with which it can be contrasted. It does not seem so strong and impetuous, because it has ceased to rush along like a narrow current of wind, and has become diffused as a general atmosphere. We are all born into it now. We inhale it with our breath. We look for the vine and cannot find it, for the simple reason that we ourselves, without perceiving it, are its branches, leaves, or grapes. We see the Church deserted, ordinances neglected, altars left without priests, beliefs abandoned; and we say, "The life blood of our religion is turning to water." If we will look in other directions, we shall see it coursing through another system of veins, redder and richer than ever.

The heart of Christianity has at length found its characteristic expression in LIFE. Of course, it will continue to have other expressions. Its thoughts will always seek utterance in the words of Teachers. Its sentiments will give themselves out in worship, and will build themselves up into religious associations of men and women. There will always be meetings for meditation, prayer, and praise. But its characteristic expression will henceforth be in deeds. Would that I could describe the affluence, the weight, the eloquence of that expression, in a way to make you feel its infinite superiority above every other. Character finds its normal expression in action. Sentiments take form most naturally in work. Christ did not spend his time inventing symbols or fashioning dogmas, but in going about doing good. The lepers coming back to the city sweet and wholesome; the lame leaping and praising God; the blind rejoicing in the light of day; the deaf drinking in the loving words of kindred and friends; the lunatic sitting clothed and in his right mind; the Magdalen weeping and forgiven, told in what shape the divine life went out from him. The law of perfect expression is the same for the disciple as for the master. The Christian Consciousness, mature and exuberant, reveals itself now in the humanities of the age. It is the soul of philanthropy. It is the spirit of regeneration. It organizes itself in working

associations for the prevention of pauperism and crime, the abolition of Slavery, the elevation of woman, and the destruction of the demon of the still. It has its apostles and prophets in a large company of men and women, who proclaim with original force and with fresh application to the sins of the time the eternal principles of the Christian Law. It has saints in a whole sisterhood of Florence Nightingales; in a whole brotherhood of Clarksons. It has its temples in a crowd of asylums, hospitals, and homes for the friendless. It has its creed, the Soul's divine Sonship, preached in the dark places where turpitude skulks and cowers, whispered in guilty prisons and doomed cells, thundered in legislative halls, and breathed into the ears of the solitary and the obscure.

Is it asked how the Christian Consciousness is to keep itself supplied with power, for all these enterprises it is undertaking? By working at the enterprises, is my reply. The heart of faith and love, like the widow's cruise, fills itself by emptying itself, grows by wasting. Self-sacrifice is its life. For my part, I am ready to confess that I find the best specimens of the Christian consciousness and life among those who are devoted to the labors of humanity. They are no sectaries perhaps, nor theologians. They are possibly connected with no church; they attend no ordinances; subscribe to no creed. They may do nothing by

money or word, to support established institutions of religion; nor are they often seen attending the instructions of a regular ministry. The ordinary means of grace, as they are called, are by them neglected. They say they need them not. Yet one finds in the best of these people a remarkable fulness of the Christian spirit. They have the noblest ideas of God as the Living Cause, the Just Ruler, the patient Friend, the loving Father of the world. They have the deepest sense of his relations to the individual soul; the most sublime and tender consciousness of his presence there. It is from the lips of these workers that one hears often the most simple, beautiful, and earnest expression of the Christian sentiments, the purest gratitude, the most reverent awe, the sincerest aspiration, the humblest trust. They too show us as shining examples of private virtue as any we behold; examples of truth, integrity, patience, perseverance, fidelity, and self-consecration, worthy of the best ages of the Church. Their humanity is the root from which these graces grow. It is also the casket which keeps them safe and sweet. They need no Sacrament of Communion, for the Holy Spirit dwells perennially in their hearts. They need no sprinkling of baptismal water, for goodness is within them,—a well of water springing up into everlasting life. They need perhaps no regular administration of the Word, for the

Word is very nigh them, even in their hearts. They need no directions for the cultivation of the Christian character, for the Christian character enlarges itself by its own laws, and enriches itself by spontaneous generation. They do the will, and so they learn the doctrine. Every kind word spoken, every good deed done, every just and merciful cause taken up, reveals the great mysteries of heavenly Truth to them, and opens a new channel of communication with the infinite fountain from whose fulness they draw their supplies.

Lift up your eyes and see how grandly the Christian Consciousness is entering on its new work ; how swiftly it is taking possession of its new field. Lift up your eyes and see how vigorously the old vine, with root in the heart of Jesus, is throwing out new shoots, twining its tendrils round new props, breathing in through its leaves the sunlight and air of a new civilization, and dropping the luscious fruit whose juices shall make glad the hearts of men ! Welcome the ancient vine whose sap is the life of God ! Welcome, every new slip that is planted in a fresh field, that is to become a vineyard ! Welcome this slip planted here ! May it take root and grow, so that when the Lord shall come seeking fruit, he may find a hundred fold.

CHARGE

BY SAMUEL LONGFELLOW

MY BROTHER:—You have heard the words of instruction and of prayer. To me it falls to speak the word of Duty; to stand with you upon the threshold of this, your new home and as you enter, speak to you as a reminding conscience. The details of duty, indeed, lie so much in the individual and the situation, are so personal and local; your previous experience as a minister will have taught you so much more of yourself, and your acquaintance with this people, so much more of them, than I, a stranger, can possibly know, that I will not undertake to speak of the things you are to do among them, but strike at once into some central principle, out of which all details will in their turn and time grow.

I charge you then, that you come here, and continue here, in the spirit of hearty consecration to the service of God and of this people. Come, and con-

tinue in the conviction that by His life, you and they can alone live. Come, and continue in the conviction, that it is therefore of ever instant and vital importance, that they should know God and live from him, that they should be filled with his peace and inspired with his righteousness, and obedient to his will. Come, and continue in the faith that God is continually seeking to redeem by his truth, his love, and his justice; that he is only waiting for human souls to open themselves to receive and communicate these; that every man who consecrates himself, becomes a receiver and an imparter; becomes, by that reception and imparting of the everlasting Spirit, a son of God, and a prophet and mediator in the world.

I do not believe, brother, that anything short of such a faith and such a consecration can be sufficient to a minister; to you, nothing else will be able always to reveal to you your duty, and give you strength to be faithful to it. Hence, it is your first and last duty, and your duty of duties, to make this perpetual act of consecration. You will not always, indeed, expect to feel it as in the flood tide of your more exalted moments; it will not always light your eye, and kindle its flame upon your lip; but it may, and it must remain in the depths of your spirit, a quiet abiding purpose to serve God, and be of service to the moral and spiritual life of these men and women and children,

among whom you are to minister as teacher, prophet, and friend.

See now, how this spirit of consecration and service will direct you in the different departments of your work.

I. In your preaching you are to serve God, by being the channel of his Truth. His Truth, you will then always remember it to be. Then to be sacredly, reverently listened to as such, as it is revealed to you. His Truth, too sacred to be lightly dealt with, crudely or hastily uttered: too sacred for the intrusion of any trivial personalities, or mere notions, fancies, ambitions, or passions of your own. God's Truth, then too sacred to be withheld a moment, after it has become a conviction within you, however that conviction may run counter to the prevalent views or prejudices. His Truth, then safe to be spoken, to be heard, to be followed, to live by, to suffer for.

In your preaching, you are to serve your people too. You will then earnestly desire, not merely to utter the truth, as it lies in your mind, but will try to put it into such forms that they will receive it into their minds, trying if by any methods you can persuade and convince them; so you will not utter it antagonistically. You will rather assume, indeed, till the contrary is proved at least, that your hearers will like to be led to new and larger, and more living aspects of truth.

But your preaching will not be confined to intellectual truths. It will aim, in part, by its appeals to quicken the spiritual affections, the religious sentiments of trust and reverence; because you will know, from your own experience, that thus you will render a most precious and elevating service to your charge, a service higher than mere doctrinal enlargement.

A yet higher service you will feel that your preaching is to render them, in urging upon them truth in its aspect of vital righteousness; moral truth as the eternal principle and spring of a noble, actual life. Believing that God is striving and working, by his eternal moral truth, by "his righteousness," to redeem this nation,—this community. You will receive every revelation of such truth as a command to you to proclaim his Law, and apply it to the public and private life of men. You will summon your people, if you are really seeking their best good, to join you in bearing witness to the truth against the living falsehoods, the immoral customs, and the unjust institutions of the country. And, if at any moment, the truth thus turns to a sword in your hand, as it assuredly will, I charge you do not drop it, because you love peace, but wield it as a true soldier of God, loving and teaching your people to love purity before peace.

And when a vested wrong, like Slavery in this country and time, seeks by bribes or defiance to silence

the speaking of the truth, the more need of speaking. The pulpit must speak or die. And if the conscience of the public and the churches is drugged, and lethargic by long connivance with wrong, the more imperative the need of the inspirers of the public conscience to wake it to life ere it sleep the sleep of death. Times and methods must be left to each man to decide for himself. But I charge you not to fail in some way to do your duty to the consciences of your people, to the moral life and salvation of the community, as well as to the dumb, helpless victims of wrong: of this and of other wrongs.

II. But your work is not alone in the pulpit, though that be your throne; and though it be, indeed, the place where a minister most truly and inwardly meets his people, unfolding to them his inmost life, as he but seldom can do in private intercourse; and this the people should remember, when they are disposed to complain of not meeting their minister often enough.

The social intercourse of a minister will depend largely upon his peculiar temperament. Congregations are sometimes unreasonable in their expectations; ministers sometimes neglectful of their opportunity. But here the principle I have suggested, will again direct you. Earnestly desirous to benefit your people, you will not shrink from some sacrifice of personal ease, taste, and predilections. If only, you say, this

parish visiting were real intercourse. Well, the spirit I am urging will lead you to make it so. It will lead you, in your visits, to go at once beneath the wearisome superficialities of ordinary intercourse into the realities of thought and life, which even the seemingly external are often longing for. And what, I ask, could more render your people satisfied with the necessarily infrequent visit of their pastor, than an earnestness of spirit in him, which would make every visit so significant and memorable, that it would be lastingly precious. Of course no artificial or forced religious talk could ever be that ; only the outflow of the Spirit in simple natural deep channels.

III. Once again, in regard to your personal habits and demeanor, the earnest purpose I have spoken of will surely settle all that. By natural affinities, it will draw you away from all that is really trivial and frivolous. You will not have to avoid any occupation or amusement, as being unclerical and unprofessional. I charge you, brother, to be unclerical and unprofessional, to be a man and yourself. You will take into all you do, the essential seriousness of a serious purpose ; the genuine, unstudied dignity of a man possessed by a dignified aim.

Finally, the Spirit of which I have spoken will keep you active and interested. It will prevent your ever asking yourself, how little can I do, and avoid blame ?

what is the minimum that will satisfy? It will lead you to be always asking, how much can I do? What more can I do? It will keep you from being satisfied with any low standard,—with any perfunctory routine.

And whenever the time comes, as come it will, if your experience be not an exception, when the first enthusiasm of new relations and a new work having worn off, you shall find your interest and that of your people relaxing; they growing critical, and you indifferent; you disposed to think it the people's fault, and they to think it yours; then recall, I beseech you, the charge of this hour; renew your consecration and your vow of service. So that you may be saved from dying out into the easy, unsatisfying routine of poorly done task-work. And, that critical experience past, you and your people shall enter upon a period of fresh interest and renewed activity; the inspiring ideal of your work shining out in yet clearer lustre than at the first.

THE
RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP

BY WILLIAM H. FURNESS

IN accordance with a time-honored custom of our Congregational Churches upon an occasion like the present, I stand here to offer to our friend and brother the Right Hand of Fellowship. The form needs no introductory explanation. It speaks for itself.

I give you this right hand then, my brother, not only in token of my own personal goodwill, but as a sign of the hearty good wishes and fervent prayers of all here and everywhere who desire the diffusion of the Christianity of the New Testament, the Religion of Light, Liberty, and Love. We recognize you as undertaking here a great work, the greatest and the best, even the service of the Truth which comes from heaven, breathing into us the spirit, not of fear, but of love, of power, and of a sound mind, and anointed by the blood of the Lord Jesus and of the glorious com-

pany of martyrs who have suffered and died in its testimony and defence.

There is no work done on this earth more animating than this ; animating, not because it realises speedy and striking outward results, but because of the intrinsic and transcendent charm of the work itself. When once we are penetrated with the force of the Truth which we would serve, we shall be only too happy to serve it, even at the price of personal popularity and success. The single and hearty service of Truth is its own exceeding great reward. Every effort that we make for it, instead of exhausting, invigorates us. Therefore, my brother, you will find your chief support there, in the Truth, in the service itself. There is the fountain, full and deep, whence you will draw inspiration.

Nevertheless, sympathy, human sympathy, must be dear to you as to us all, and very animating. Made as we are, it cannot be otherwise. Jesus himself, powerfully as he was sustained by the consciousness of doing the Divine Will,—and on one occasion, as you recollect, he was so refreshed by it, that, although he was weary, hungry, and thirsty a little while before, he lost all appetite for the food that was set before him, unconscious of his bodily wants, having meat to eat that the world knew not of,—Jesus himself, the great Master of us all in teaching, longed, as his last request for affection-

ate remembrance shows, for human sympathy. But it was denied him. No right hand of fellowship was extended to him. As to the great purpose of his life, he stood all alone. And this it is that constitutes the unapproached grandeur of his character, the sublimity of his position. Still we know, from the profound tenderness of his spirit, that human sympathy would have refreshed him greatly. If to him, self-sustained, God-sustained, this human support was dear, how much more must it be so to us !

Take this hand then again, my brother, in assurance of our sympathy with you in every brave and honest effort that you make for God and for Man. Our good wishes, our prayers, our blessings, shall go with you. We know how hard it is to serve Truth in perfect singleness of heart, unmoved by human fear or favor, Truth, so often disliked, hated, persecuted. We would cheer you with our heartfelt sympathy, and remind you that no faithful service, no true brotherly fidelity to your fellow-men, even when none on earth appreciate it, can possibly fail. Once more, may God guide, and strengthen, and bless you !

And, brothers and sisters of this infant church, may I take occasion to remind you that the success of your pastor and of this new enterprise of yours, depends greatly upon a clear and constant recognition on your part of the duty which you owe to him and to the cause

which you have engaged to promote. As he is bound TO SPEAK the truth of God,—he that hath my word, let him speak that word faithfully, what is the chaff to the wheat! saith the Lord,—so are you bound, with equal solemnity, TO HEAR what he speaks, with patience and candor. It is all the more important that you should be profoundly impressed with a sense of this duty, because you may so easily evade or neglect it, when you are tempted to do so. Your pastor's duty rests upon him alone, incommunicably. Your duty is divided among many; and it is a small thing apparently, very easily done, to stay away from Church, if you think that anything may be said here that will displease you. But when any great principle is at stake, the smallest act, a word spoken or forborne to be spoken, becomes critical. It is a little thing to come to Church or to stay away; but it is a momentous act, when, by the one or the other, you commit yourself to the Right or to the Wrong. Then it is a great act, a day of judgment to the soul, deciding its course and its lot for good or for evil, we know not for how long. With sincere respect and most friendly interest, I pray you to consider this, and to remember also that, whenever you withhold your attendance from the ministrations of your pastor, without the clear warrant of your judgment and conscience, you neglect your chief duty to him and to Truth. Speaking to you from his honest convictions, he is

clothed with the high authority which belongs to Truth and Honesty, and has a right that you cannot in justice and honor deny him to an honest and candid hearing. You cannot better serve the cause of Liberal Christianity, than by giving it to be seen that it raises its friends above all cowardice and narrowness,—that it gives special encouragement to Free Thought and Free Speech, listening candidly to every faithful word.

I have given the Right Hand of Fellowship to your pastor. Take it, brethren and friends, as a sign of our affectionate good wishes for you all.

